

Legislators push Defense Secretary Gates to keep Fairview Health Services serving Minnesota veterans

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar and the Minnesota Congressional Delegation today urged Department of Defense Secretary Robert Gates to help Fairview Health Services continue to provide health care to more than 1,200 Minnesota veterans through the cost-effective TRICARE program. Four clinics in the Fairview and Columbia Park area may need to leave the TRICARE network because Fairview Health Services is unable to receive "Gold Status" for all of their participating clinics. Clinics that have "Gold Status" are able to refer patients among themselves - a benefit that cuts down on cost and paperwork for administrators, physicians, and patients.

"In light of these events, we are hoping that you can clarify the reason why Fairview Health Services was denied full acceptance into the TRICARE Gold Status program. Veterans who have served our country honorably deserve continued, high quality care at these clinics, and we look forward to working with you to address this matter," the legislators said in the letter.

The four clinics that Fairview Health Services is considering dropping from TRICARE have participated in the program for several years.

The full text of the letter is below:

December 2, 2010

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary of Defense
Department of Defense
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Gates:

We write to request your assistance on behalf of active and retired military personnel and their

families who are served by Minnesota's Fairview Health Services. Fairview Health Services has recently indicated its intention to terminate its contract with TRICARE for the Fairview Columbia Park group of clinics. This decision is likely to negatively impact the health security of more than 1,200 veterans in our region.

According to Fairview Health Systems, the four clinics in the Fairview Columbia Park group have participated for several years in the TRICARE Gold Status program. Clinics that participate in the program are able to refer patients amongst themselves, a benefit which cuts down on cost and paperwork for administrators, physicians and patients. In the hope of achieving ease of referrals between all of its clinics, Fairview Health Services has twice sought "Gold Status" for the other clinics in its network. Both times, and as recently as this summer, the Department of Defense has denied their request. It is our understanding that Fairview Health Systems was provided no explanation for why these decisions were made.

This has made it difficult for Fairview Health Services to allow these clinics alone to continue participating in the TRICARE Gold Status program. As a result, Fairview Health Services has been forced to make the decision to withdraw entirely from the TRICARE network.

In light of these events, we are hoping that you can clarify the reason why Fairview Health Services was denied full acceptance into the TRICARE Gold Status program. Veterans who have served our country honorably deserve continued, high quality care at these clinics, and we look forward to working with you to address this matter. Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator Al Franken
U.S. Representative Jim Oberstar
U.S. Representative Collin Peterson
U.S. Representative Betty McCollum
U.S. Representative John Kline
U.S. Representative Michele Bachmann
U.S. Representative Keith Ellison
U.S. Representative Tim Walz
U.S. Representative Erik Paulsen

